

COLD DUCK

Once or twice a week my wife
and I pop the cork on a
bottle of Cold Duck for a
quiet, congenial party of two,
just she and I.

It's not a thing we plan ahead
of time, it just happens. Anyone
hearing about it who's the least bit
familiar with our financial status
(which is continually broke) must
think we're a bit odd, habitually
drinking champagne when we
can't even afford beer, but it's
not really that expensive,
as my wife is quick to point out,
only a dollar more than a
six pack. It doesn't bloat you
like beer, and there's a
refined aspect to it we both like.

I'm afraid of waking the kids so
I open the Cold Duck out on
the back porch, peeling off
the gold tinfoil or wire cap
by the light of the laundryroom
then easing out the cork
with both thumbs until it
pops, shooting straight up
50 feet or more.

The neighbors, naturally, think
us terrible luses, finding
stray white plastic corks
like crashed misguided missiles
in their flowerbeds. I can see
their point; really, who drinks
champagne in Lakewood? But
it keeps us sane and makes
for a cozy evening at home.

I used to sit around bars but now
I'd rather stay home and drink
with my wife. She's better company,
certainly better to look at, and
we generally have a damn good time.

She makes a bowl of popcorn,
we manage three glasses each
per bottle of Cold Duck, there
are old movies or we just talk,
and I don't have to worry about
crashing the car or getting
beat up by neanderthal urban
cowboys.

I was recommending it to a friend,
half expecting groans of censure,
but he knew just how I felt.
"It's called maturity," he said,
"it happens to the best of us."

ODE FOR THE VERY SEPARATE

Dress for comfort
because at ease, you'll look your best.
Resist the temptation
to complain about growing older
we all do, and anyway
you can always call it maturity.

By the same token
stories about how much fun
we had in the good old days
must be avoided like the plague.

Forget about your hair
there's not much you can do about it
and don't kid yourself into believing
a beard or a mustache
will divert attention
from a bald spot or a receding hairline.

Do your work
don't talk too much
expect nothing
know your limits and stick to them
leave early.